

**FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS UNDER PL 106-107
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
GRANT STREAMLINING AND SIMPLIFICATION ACTIVITIES
May 2004 through May 2005**

The National Endowment for the Humanities is pleased to report its accomplishments in streamlining its internal grant application and administration procedures and in improving services to applicants and grantees.

Participation in the Government-wide Streamlining and Grants.gov Efforts

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is actively participating in all facets of the government-wide grant streamlining efforts and in a number of other inter-agency groups concerned with grants administration. Agency staff are active members of the Grants Executive Board, Federal Grant Streamlining Program Interagency Pre-Award and Post-Award Working Groups, and two of their subgroups, one tasked with development of the Performance Progress Report (PPR) and the other for the development of the Federal Financial Report (FFR).

In the workgroup for the FFR, we were actively involved in the preparation of language for revision of the financial reporting sections in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars A-102 and A-110 and the preparation of draft notices for the *Federal Register* for the issuance of the FFR to the agencies. NEH staff represented the subgroup at meetings with the Payment Management System staff regarding a proposed pilot of the FFR on their website, and at meetings with staff at OMB.

In regard to the PPR, NEH staff spent numerous hours at meetings reviewing, resolving and responding to the formal comments from the federal agencies on the draft PPR, and redrafting a revised PPR, detailed instructions and a draft notice for the *Federal Register*.

As a member of the Post-Award Reporting Subgroup, NEH staff also reviewed and provided comments on drafts of the government-wide real property and tangible personal property reports and related instructions and business rules.

NEH is an active participant on the Pre-Award Workgroup, and has reviewed and provided comments on several draft versions of the general terms and conditions for awards and the proposed standard award format.

NEH staff attended meetings of the Research Business Models Subgroup preparing a performance progress report for research and research-related grants, and reviewed and provided comments on several draft versions of the proposed reporting format.

NEH also attends the bi-monthly Grants.gov Stakeholders group meetings. The NEH Chief Information Officer (CIO) has made several presentations before this group on various matters regarding NEH's involvement in Grants.gov. NEH was also a member of the Cultural Agencies Workgroup, which devised two application data sets originally just for use by the cultural agencies, but now adopted for government-wide use as the SF 424-Short Organizational and SF 424-I (Individual) to be used in grant applications.

NEH staff are actively involved in the Grants Network, the National Grants Partnership, and the Grants Management Line of Business (GMLoB) Task Force. Involvement in these groups allows us to stay informed and find additional opportunities to participate in streamlining activities.

In July of 2004, NEH provided extensive comments on the Grants Management Line of Business Task Force's Common Solution White Paper, which outlined options for the task force's future activities. NEH staff then met with representatives of the GMLoB in August 2004, to discuss these issues in depth.

Finally, NEH was chosen as one of the few agencies to meet with representatives of the Government Accountability Office in conjunction with the GAO audit on the implementation of P.L. 106-107. NEH staff discussed with GAO representatives NEH's progress in the P.L. 106-107 streamlining efforts and a number of our comments were included in the final report.

Internal Efforts to Create an Environment Conducive to Grants Streamlining and Simplification and Assess Impact of Changes

General Approach

The National Endowment for the Humanities continually works to improve the effectiveness and performance of its grant programs through staff evaluations and the solicitation of advice about procedures and guidelines from the humanities practitioners who serve as panelists in the agency's merit review process. In addition, visitors to and users of the NEH website at www.neh.gov are invited to provide comments and suggestions on our programs, guidelines, forms, and instructions.

NEH management holds monthly meetings with the Division Directors and Office Heads, where updates on grants streamlining efforts and ideas for new initiatives are discussed. In addition, the NEH's CIO holds regular meetings attended by representatives of each NEH office to discuss the latest developments on Grants.gov and on-line grant application and other electronic projects and initiatives that are underway both government-wide and within the agency.

NEH continues to review, update and streamline grant application guidelines and forms through the mechanism of the internal agency clearance process. The roster of clearing officers includes two members who are NEH's representatives to the Federal

Grant Streamlining Program Interagency Pre-Award and Post-Award Working Groups. As a result, all NEH guidelines have been revised to be consistent with the latest government-wide initiatives on grants streamlining.

Over the course of the past year, NEH has posted on the NEH website the majority of forms, policies, and instructions that grantees use in the administration of their grant. Grantees can go to the "Grant Management" page of the NEH website and download or find links to the most up-to-date version of all the documents that they may need to administer their NEH grant. In the past, paper copies of most of these documents were mailed to the grantee with the grant award letter. Use of the NEH website has saved NEH a great deal in printing and mailing costs and also insures that grantees have the latest information at their disposal.

Implementing the Changes Affecting the Pre-Award Process

A. Grants.gov FIND

All of NEH's funding opportunities are posted on Grants.gov FIND. When new funding opportunities are posted on the NEH website, they are also posted on Grants.gov FIND.

B. Announcement Template

The NEH website contains all of the announcements of funding opportunities offered by the agency and provides detailed information and application instructions for each. All NEH funding opportunity announcements follow the required announcement template, with the exception of one data element, the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number. That number will be added to NEH funding opportunity announcements over the course of the next several months.

C. Grants.gov APPLY

| After two successful pilots during FY 2004, NEH began an aggressive schedule to post all our institutional grant opportunities onto Grants.Gov to allow our constituents to apply electronically. On July 19, 2005 we were notified by Grants.Gov that we have officially received a "gold star" because our agency exceeded both of our FY 2005 OMB-imposed goals for Grants.Gov. Specifically, OMB gave us a target of posting 5 packages for FY 2005, which we have greatly exceeded by posting 30 packages. They also gave us a target of receiving 100 applications electronically, which we have now exceeded with 105 thus far.

During the past year, NEH also developed and posted a special Grants.gov outreach page on the NEH website. A button with the Grants.gov logo was placed in various strategic locations throughout the NEH website which linked to this page. The outreach page tells applicants in three easy steps how to apply for our grants via Grants.gov. It also provides links to a registration checklist that was developed by NEH staff and is

considered by applicants a vast improvement over the one originally provided by Grants.gov.

NEH shared this new page with the Grants.gov project management office who liked our instructions so much that they are now using our language on the Grants.gov website. They also immediately shared it with the other agencies as a stellar example of agency initiative and urged them to adapt it for use on their own websites, which a number of other agencies have in fact done.

In addition to the outreach page, the NEH Office of Information Resources Management placed some PowerPoint presentations about Grants.gov onto the agency's intranet site for use by NEH staff in outreach to our applicant community. NEH staff can use these or modify them for their outreach events.

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